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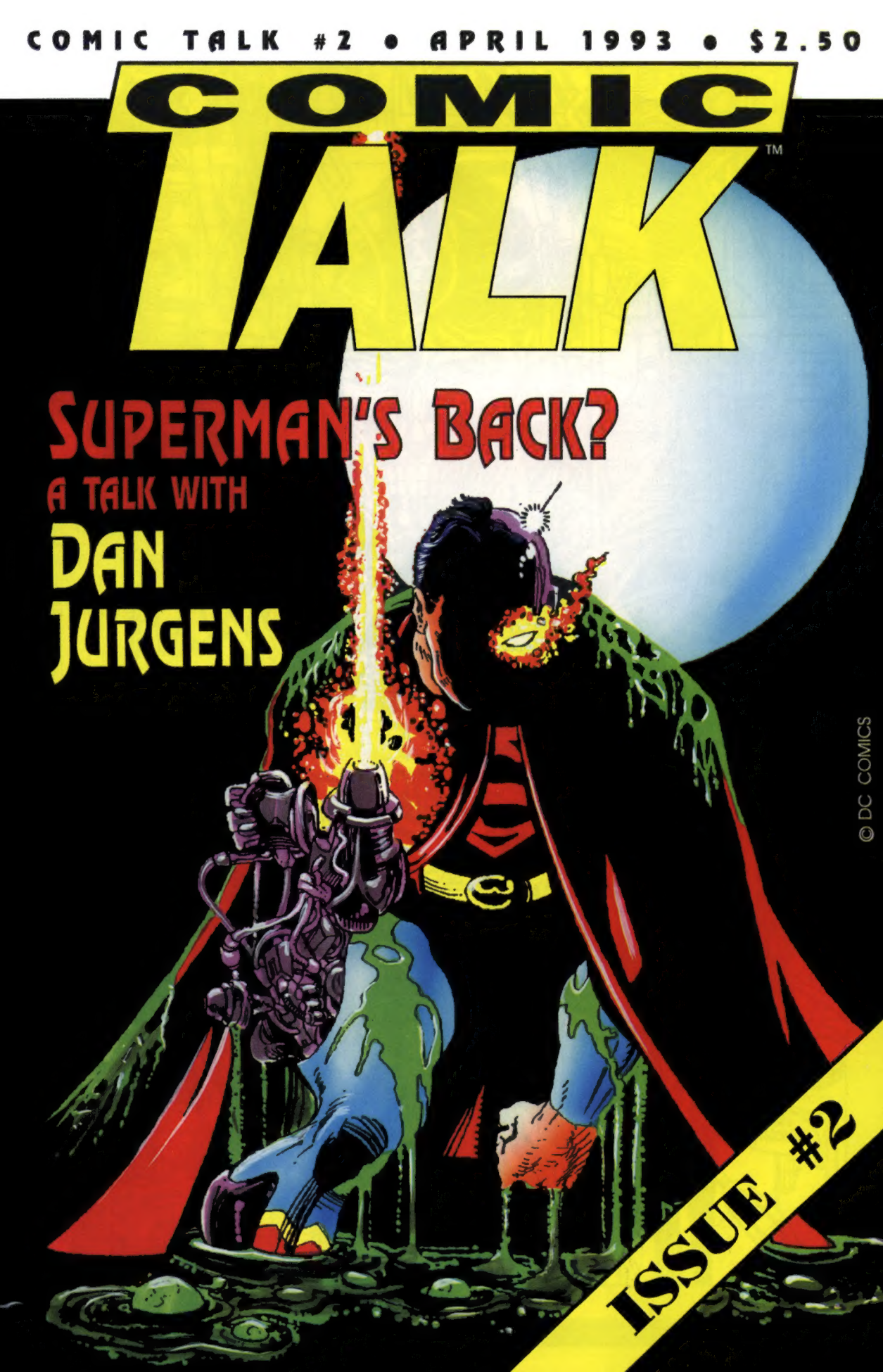
COMIC TALK™



SUPERMAN'S BACK?

A TALK WITH DAN JURGENS

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ISSUE #2

TUROKAN BREEDING!

COMIC TALK

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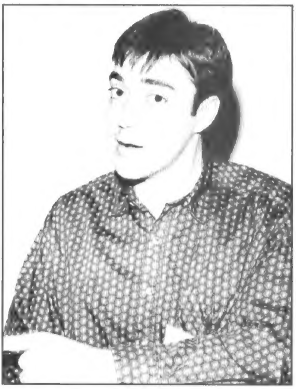
INTRODUCTION



Dan Jurgens at the Great Eastern Comic Book Convention in New York City, January, 1993.

When Ed Polgardy, the Editor of Comic Talk, called me up a few months ago and asked:

"Joe, do you know who Dan Jurgens is?" I responded.

"Yeah, Ed, basically. I've heard the name but I don't know his work.

"Well, do you want to do an interview with the guy who killed Superman?"

"*Hell, yes*" I said, then ran out and got the Death of Superman issues, and read'em."

It's probably been more than ten years since I'dlooked at an issue of Superman, but now that they were killing him off it seemed as good a time as any to jump in. So I read the whole deal (honest opinion: I got a kick out of it), thought to myself, "I gotta get this guy on the phone", while at the same time knowing that I wanted to be tough with my questions. Like, "Where's the characterization, Dan?"

And Dan answered everything. If an interviewer could have one wish, it would be to speak to somebody like Dan Jurgens, who tells it straight, calls-it-like-he-sees-it, and doesn't run or hide when the touchy subjects come up. Thanks, Dan.

Joe Monks

DAN:

Joe Monks: So, Superman's definitely coming back in April, no question?

Dan Jurgens: Well, the best we can say is that the books are coming back in April. In other words, we've been on hiatus for a couple of months and April 14th you'll see Adventures of Superman #500 hit the stands.

JM: What can we expect in terms of the rebirth of Superman? The CBG hit with an article that mentioned somebody at Advance Comics was talking about four different Supermen. Any truth to that?

DJ: The only element of truth that we're going to see that came out of the Advance Comics interview that you're referring to is that there will be four different Supermen, but as for the rest of the content of the interview, in which he says that one is hispanic and one is something this and one is something that, no, that is not correct.

JM: How do the guys in the office react to something like this? The covers got published before the series was supposed to come out, somebody got hold of information before Superman was even rumored to be killed. What's that like for a creator, and for the businessman at DC when things seem to be getting scooped or mentioned far earlier than you guys expected?

DJ: I think that it caused the guys at DC a little bit of consternation at times. One thing it proves is that there is this interest in Superman that you can't deny. Certainly to take my own creation, if all this was happening to Booster Gold, say, no one would care. I mean, in terms of the national interest, if Advance Comics called the New York Times or whoever else and said

something about Booster Gold dying, the Times wouldn't care, so I'm actually gratified the world cares enough about what we're doing to pay attention.

JM: Speaking of the world paying attention, how much truth is there to the fact that the entire death of Superman was more of a scheme to sell books than actually to do something differently with the characters creatively?

DJ: The amount of truth to that statement is zero. Let me backtrack just a little bit. When we do the Superman books and by we I mean all the writers and all the artists and all the inkers, the way we work is we get together a couple of times a year and talk over a lot of different storylines and any number of different possibilities are tossed around. In this particular case I came to the meeting and I had a couple of ideas, one of which was a tremendously physical opponent for Superman because I had felt that we had gotten far too quiet and far too cerebral with characters like Lex Luthor who was just a normal guy, and Brainiac who was just sort of a mind control type villain. So, I came in and said "We've got to do a very physical story. We've got to give Superman an opponent who can really give him a run for his money because if you think about it you know there really isn't one." Beyond that I said, "Then, we might do the death of Superman." As we talked about those things, the two ideas became one and what Superman's death became for us as writers wasn't that it was just so exciting to do a story of the death of Superman, but the intriguing possibilities in doing the stories afterwards. Everything that happened and everything that came about was really based on character development and story content, being able to write stories about Ma and Pa Kent losing their only son and about Lois Lane losing her fiance. All the marketing stuff and all the marketing interests came much, much later. Any time we write a story, we hope it's going to sell. We never write a story saying, "Gee, this isn't going to sell worth beans." Anything we do we want it to sell, but this was never crafted in any way as a crass, exploitative attempt to capitalize on Superman.

JM: Did you find that there was any resistance to it when you started? Obviously when you're going to kill off Superman, you know you are going to put books on hiatus (This is the first time in approximately 50 years that there was a month without a Superman title). Any pressure from above on those?

DJ: Actually two things I want to say about that. One when we were in that meeting Jenette Kahn was there. Jenette takes a very active interest in Superman and is tremendously supportive of what we're doing on the book and for that we are appreciative. She had some concerns about how we would do it and was actually interested that we'd do it with some sense of class per se, and not just kill Superman, but also do what we all wanted, which was to tell the stories that I talked about earlier—how it affects Ma and Pa Kent and Lois Lane and Jimmy Olsen and the rest. Also, in regards to the marketing/stunt aspect of it and stopping the books for a while, that was actually Bruce Bristow's idea. Stopping publishing for a couple of months to emphasize the fact that he was gone, that was a marketing device and that was Bruce's idea and I think it was a good one, if for no other reason than that it gave me a break 'cause I was beat.

JM: How long had you been working on the series up until that point?

"WE'VE GOT TO DO A VERY PHYSICAL STORY. WE'VE GOT TO GIVE SUPERMAN AN OPPONENT WHO CAN REALLY GIVE HIM A RUN FOR HIS MONEY... THEN, WE MIGHT DO THE DEATH OF SUPERMAN."

WITH SUPERMAN, I THINK IT WAS TIME FOR US TO DO SOMETHING BIG, AND I GUESS I WANTED TO SHOOT THE MOON... TAKE A CHANCE.

DJ: I've been working on this series since 1987 so it's been about five years for me.

JM: You said you go into meetings at the beginning of the year; how long had you been toying with the idea of killing earth's greatest super-hero?

DJ: I just kept thinking of it in the standpoint of wanting to do something big with the character. To me the best elements in comics are defined by several things. For one thing I've always said that the Fantastic Four represents the best pure creative concept in comics, and that's in super-hero comics, because with the Fantastic Four you can tell a story as big as the entire universe. You can tell a story about God or Galactus times ten with the Fantastic Four and they fit very naturally. Or you can tell a small story because they are a family unit, a brother and a sister, a husband and a wife and two old college buddies. Superman, is the one character at DC that I think really lends himself to that. We can tell a story as big as the universe or we can talk again about him and his parents when he was in Kansas as a kid. With Superman, I think it was time for us to do something big, and I guess I wanted to shoot the moon and see what we could come up with, take a chance. I think as writers you've got to roll the dice once in a while. Even when I suggested it, I said "We are either going to look like a bunch of idiots or we'll come off looking good," so that's where that came from.

JM: The resurrection issue, what could you guys do, sitting around that table where you came up with the ideas to bring him back, that's not going to be cliched or trendy or plain sneaking in through the back door?

DJ: By the end of the Adventures #500 what you will have seen is a story that picks up on a lot of the storylines we left off with Superman #77. We will find out, a lot of different things, but at the end of Adventures #500 we are left with one thing, an empty casket. We don't know what happened to Superman. We don't know where he is or who he is or if he's alive or what happened, but at the end of Adventures #500 we'll find an empty casket. Then we'll proceed into sort of another ending for Adventures #500 where all of a sudden there are reports of Superman fighting all around the country, and two weeks after Adventures #500 comes out all four books, Superman #78, Man of Steel #22, Adventures #501 and Action whatever it will be, all released that same week, will each open up with a different Superman. Yes, there will be

four different Supermen. The idea is, and the mystery will be, which one of these four is the real Superman? At that point, how did they survive, or which one is real, and how did he come back to life? You will have a black character who says he's Superman wearing a tremendous sort of metallic armor, and he's saying he's Superman because Superman's spirit has inhabited him. We are bringing back Superboy who will say that somehow he was regenerated into a youth. There will be another Superman that is half cyborg/half alien who says he is Superman reconstructed, and another very Kryptonian Superman. It will be the mystery that will play out then over the next several months of which one is the real guy and how did it happen. It's something that, if you went back and heard all the rumors, and all the speculation of what was going to happen and how it was going to be done, no one ever came up with. So we kept the lid on it for a good, long time.

JM: While the guys are working and reports are flying, what do you guys do to make sure that lid stays on? Does it just come down to basically that the guys working on it have to keep it tight, or are there too many people involved and then like you said, rumors get started and things get leaked?

DJ: We don't tell anybody. I mean it really is that simple. The writers on the books know, the artists on the books know, Jenette knows and Mike Carlin knows and that's about it. That's how we keep the lid on it, for a while. Eventually of course, we bring more people into it. We have to start telling more people, then of course anyone who walks through the DC offices might hear a bit of it here and a bit of it there. I think the only way to keep a secret is to keep as few people as possible from knowing about it and that's what we attempt to do.

JM: Are you going to attempt to keep four separate supermen or is the goal actually to get back down to the guy who died in the last issue?

DJ: I think what you'll see as we play this story out, over six months time, is that it really is going to be "guess which Superman is the real one." By the time we're finished with it I suppose we could still have one, two, three or four Supermen. Certainly we'll have several new characters. Whether or not

they'll continue to call themselves Superman is in doubt but eventually we'll answer a lot of the questions you just asked. It's a little bit too early to talk about those yet.

JM: Okay. What about Doomsday? Being that both characters died in the issue, are there any plans to either bring him back or explain where this guy came from?

DJ: You'll see something about Doomsday in Superman #78; that's the first issue of Superman that comes out after Adventures #500, and as I understand it this interview will kind of come out in between so I don't want to tip the hand on Doomsday yet. I will say we're going to see more of Doomsday, and we'll continue to drop hints about what he was and where he came from.

JM: To get back to rumors, originally, and even the national papers picked up on this, I heard there was some sort of uproar about making Doomsday an asylum character, a loony basically, and I know you guys received some backlash. Can you talk a little about that and also maybe, if not tip us off, give us an inkling if that was really set in stone—a plan that got changed at the end?

DJ: Here's what happened, and it's really easy to see how this came about. Mike Carlin gave an interview at one point and he was trying to describe to the writer of the interview what Doomsday's character was like and as a purely descriptive sort of phrase he said "He's like an escaped lunatic from a cosmic insane asylum." He never said Doomsday was that, and Doomsday was never, ever intended to be that. There was never any hint of that. For Mike it was just a descriptive sort of element. Of course, the article ran, it was picked up on several times, and some various mental health organizations became aware of it and were somehow offended by it. We (by we I mean DC) spoke to them, showed them the stories and all of that, and it's important to note that Doomsday's origin has nothing to do with cosmic insane asylums, nor did it ever have anything to do with cosmic insane asylums. We never changed anything to meet anyone's idea of what Doomsday should be because certainly what you are talking about then is outside censorship and I don't think there are any writers who would stand still for that. So no,

nothing was ever changed to conform with any of that, it's purely that Doomsday was never intended to be that, and we want to keep his origin a mystery because it gives us something to work with for a good, long time.

JM: Is it going to be an equally long trip for the origin of Doomsday, for the creators to go down that road as well? Is it going to be explained in a big, graphic novel or is it going to be drawn out as the rest of the Superman series continues?

DJ: I actually want to do a Doomsday miniseries where I can explore a lot of those things. In my mind, Doomsday has been around for an incredibly long time. I mean incredibly long. I hypothesize for example that when his cell was placed here on earth it was long, long ago and that Doomsday, if we would travel throughout the universe, is an almost legendary sort of murderous villain. For example, if someone said to Darkseid 'Doomsday is coming' even Darkseid would fear Doomsday. Even the guardians would fear Doomsday. Those are the themes I want to explore in a mini-series.

JM: A lot of other characters brought in the series like Guy Gardner and such really got kicked around, but at the end you basically find out that many of them showed up again. Are the effects of Doomsday going to be felt like a shock wave throughout all the rest of the books at DC Universe, and will that continue to pop up in other series, or are you going to try to limit it to Superman and maybe a Doomsday mini-series?

DOOMSDAY... WE WANT TO KEEP HIS ORIGIN A MYSTERY BECAUSE IT GIVES US SOMETHING TO WORK WITH FOR A GOOD, LONG TIME.

DJ: I think it should have worked that way but some of the various writers and editors missed the boat. I think we offered them some great themes to play along with but they were either too tied into their own storylines or simply chose not to address Superman's death in their titles. I tried to explore some of the various character's feelings in Justice League of America but really only had the room to do a surface treatment. When we originally planned the story we envisioned the entire universe of DC heroes wearing black arm bands in all their titles and perhaps doing a story connected to Superman's death. Very few took advantage of the opportunity and that's too bad. For those that did...thanks a lot. I think it's the kind of thing that makes for good comics and a richer, more consistent universe of characters.

JM: Was there any pressure on the other creators beforehand or does it seem that as it got up to that point, there hadn't been as much thought in their books given to the fact that their characters would be tied into the storyline?

DJ: I think it's both to tell you the truth. It's not a question of pressure. I think what you ideally do is say look here's an opportunity to tie into a major event if you should want to do that; this happens all the time, but all writers have their own storylines in progress at the moment. I'm not talking about anything like a massive crossover, but I think in this day and age of publishing where you have universes, whether it's a Valiant or whether it's Image's or Marvel's old one which all

hang together very, very well, in this new age of publishing you've got to keep the tapestry intact. You've got to let your readers know that one character's actions have an effect on the others and if they don't care, and by "they" I mean the other writers, enough to have any sort of connection, then I don't think they ought to be writing the book. I mean at some point these characters have to have a relationship to each other and no one is saying that it has to be a crossover, but I believe strongly that in a book like Flash or Wonder Woman or something else they should give a nod to this mammoth thing that just happened, and if they've been part of Justice League and just had their ass royally kicked by Doomsday, that should be reflected elsewhere. That's the end of my sermon on this.

JM: You mentioned crossovers, when the new Superman titles are released, and obviously there's going to be plenty going back and forth in all those titles. Is it a necessity to pick up, as with the death of Superman, all the books at once to get the full story? Are people who are collecting say, one or two of the Superman books, going to need to collect all of them now to make sure they have the entire storyline intact? How important is that in this upcoming April surge?

DJ: At first, I don't know that it will be tremendously important. Eventually it's certainly going to get to the point where for a couple of months they'll want to collect all the books. I would like to think they would do it now just because we are telling good, entertaining stories that are certainly worth picking up.

Let's say that the one week that all four books come out, everybody buys all four of those books, I think all of our hopes are that the readers are intrigued enough to keep coming back so that they will continue to pick up all four books, not because they feel they have to get all the stories but because they want to because the stories are good. I think that's what we all hope for.

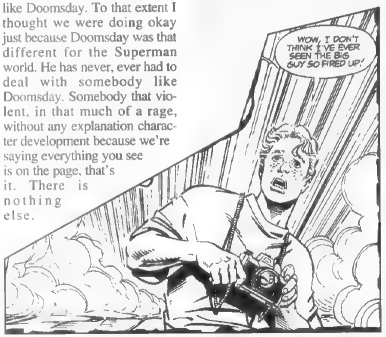
JM: Was that a decision made before the actual death of Superman, to do that in all four books at the same time in the same week, or did that come about after it was projected that the death was going to be a phenomenal success?

DJ: Actually that came about later. After we killed Superman and saw the media outcry, I went into the meeting with the attitude of, "Gee, somehow we want to get everybody back on board fast and we don't want to disappoint anybody. Let's hit them hard and fast with a good story," and it was actually my idea to release all four books at once. I said let's give it to them right on a platter, right up-front, really get them into it, show them that there are four different Superman titles right off with four different intriguing directions and possibilities. What DC wanted to do at that point was keep Adventure #500 as a separate sort of special element so they took that out of the pack to release that two weeks earlier, replacing it with Adventures #501 the following week but it still has the same affect. It says here are the four books, buy them, give it a try. If you don't like it then don't buy them but if you do, stay with us, we think we've got a pretty party coming up.

JM: Let's get away from the death and rebirth; I want to get into a couple of things about the creative process. You mentioned character development before and you mentioned some of the storylines following Superman's death. As a creative person rather than somebody working with DC, did you feel that there was any loss of character development in the series leading up to the death? Basically you get a lot of fight scenes, especially in the latter half, and Doomsday is introduced with no character development because you're going to do an origin story later. How tough is that for you as a creator? Working on one character with no character development at all, just an insane killing machine, and basically a lot of fight scenes for the last half of the series?

DJ: I think that with Doomsday, to me it wasn't a problem. Superman has had loads and loads of villains that everyone understands up one side and down the next. Lex Luthor has been around forever. Everyone understands him. They understand Brainiac. They understand Toyman. God knows whoever else has been around for a while. I actually thought that Doomsday, as just a violent rage on legs, was something totally new for Superman. Superman has never, ever met anything like Doomsday. To that extent I thought we were doing okay just because Doomsday was that different for the Superman world. He has never, ever had to deal with somebody like Doomsday. Somebody that violent, in that much of a rage, without any explanation character development because we're saying everything you see is on the page, that's it. There is nothing else.

SUPERMAN HAS HAD LOADS AND LOADS OF VILLAINS THAT EVERYONE UNDERSTANDS UP ONE SIDE AND DOWN THE NEXT. LEX LUTHOR... BRAINIAC... TOYMAN... SUPERMAN HAS NEVER, EVER MET ANYTHING LIKE DOOMSDAY.



This guy is hell on wheels. With Doomsday, that's all there is, of course, without the origin. As far as the fight scenes, one of the big concerns I did have is that the public at large would go out and pick up Superman #75 and be disappointed that all they got was a fight. Certainly in the six issues or so that lead up to it, including the other book from Justice League, yes it was one big fight scene, but we knew for the death of Superman we needed something big and, again, Superman had never done anything like this before. In terms of the storytelling element, we wanted to not only deal with a fight but quicken the pace of the fight and that's why we had the countdown of panels, with four panels per page, then three panels, then two panels, then just flash pages across the books that then go to a double page spread and to a triple page spread so we could actually speed up the sense of a fight just like in a boxing match. Yes, we gave everybody a lot of fight and not a lot of character development and I think we pushed it as far as we could, but in the two months of books that come out after Superman #75, the Funeral for a Friend story, that's where we deal with all of that stuff. I think at that point you are getting a lot of character development and a lot of character reaction and a lot of the feel of what the death of Superman means to us. We deal with, "what does it mean to Lois?" and "what does it mean to all these other characters?" Here again, that's something that could have worked well in Batman. What does the death of Superman mean to Batman in his book? Or Green Lantern, Flash, the Demon? Any of the heroes? These people, these characters, knew each other! Let's convey their emotions to the readers!

JM: Speaking of that, the panel where Jimmy Olsen is taking a photo of his dead friend,that's an incredibly powerful panel and, obviously he's going to say a lot about the fact that he can still hold his camera up and take that picture. Did you guys tinker with that at all? Was that something that people said, hey, this is really his best male friend on earth, and it's a photo opportunity for him? Did people question that before it went off to press?

DJ: We actually talked about that a great deal because one of the things that comes up in the next issue of Adventure, is we see a photo of Superman lying on his back upside down on the cover, and that Jimmy Olsen was there photographing the whole scene. You'll see this in an issue of Superman #77. As we do the story Jimmy is tortured over the fact that he's taken these photos and it's an intensely private thing for him

because Superman was his best friend, and at the same time Jimmy was there doing his job. Later when they put together a Superman special, Jimmy is tortured over the fact that he took these photos and he feels a tremendous sense of guilt that instead of clicking the camera he somehow should have been in there fighting against Doomsday and helping his buddy. So yes, that becomes part of the storyline and we were very conscious of it as writers as we planned the entire story and Jimmy, he's going to get rich from that photo alone because it has been reproduced so many places and so often, but how would you feel if you took a picture of your best friend's death and you got rich off it? Those are some of the things we're going to play with.

JM: We mentioned what the death means to actual comic characters. What about what it was going to mean to a) the readers and b) even more importantly, the younger readers, who aren't jaded and thinking "oh he'll be back in six months anyway." What about the readers who are growing up on him right now? What were your responsibilities going into this series and did you live up to them?

DJ: That's a tough one to answer because to a certain extent you know...John Byrne has written a couple of letters to the CBG wherein he said, "Look, anyone who believes Superman is dead and not ever going to appear again is an idiot," while I wouldn't be so crass in putting it that way, my response has been look, hang with us, tell them to read the story and just give us a chance. At the same time, I did a radio show recently where a woman called me up and just barked at me because her kid was so upset by all of this. I tried to very kindly tell her she should explain to her son the concept that this is fiction, it is just a story and just because Superman is dying this month in a comic book doesn't mean there won't be Superman peanut butter or any more movies or Underoos or whatever. She didn't quite relate to what I was saying but I

understand kids being upset and if they are upset then maybe they'll just be overjoyed at the fact that somehow the Superman books are coming back. I feel some sense of responsibility, but at the same time my greatest responsibility is to tell a very good, entertaining story that contributes to the Superman mythos and I think that that's what we've done.

JM: Have you gotten much of that type response? Looking at all the characters in either the DC or the Marvel or any universe, a lot of them have had a tendency recently to become these really dark, brooding characters. Any flack for taking Superman, who has never really had that aspect in his character, to that dark side? Any heavy write-in mail? Anything like that?

...I DID A RADIO SHOW RECENTLY WHERE A WOMAN CALLED ME UP AND JUST BARKED AT ME BECAUSE HER KID WAS SO UPSET BY THIS.

DJ: I think there's been some of that. There are those who have said that this is cynical and that we've taken it to the dark side by killing him as an effort to raise sales. If that is your point of view then I guess we've done that. That, however, is not the truth. We did this as a) a reason to tell some good different stories and b) to raise sales, but any story we tell in Superman we hope will raise sales. We never, as I said earlier, set out to do a story designed to throw sales into a tailspin. Anything we do we hope is good and will sell more than the month before and there isn't a writer in comics who would say otherwise about their own book.

IF I HAD MY WAY... WE WOULDN'T HAVE SEEN OR HEARD ANYTHING OF SUPERMAN FOR AT LEAST A YEAR... BUT I OBVIOUSLY DID NOT GET MY WAY.

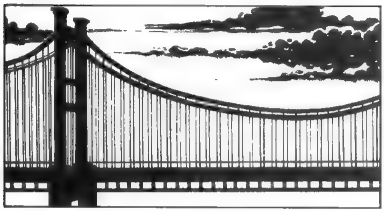
JM: A lot of these books are going to be released around Easter. A conscious decision to resurrect Superman to coincide with the resurrection holiday of Catholic lore?

DJ: No, I wouldn't say that, and it's not just Catholic lore, it would be religious lore. I'm looking at my calendar right now and actually that's a good question. I want to see when Easter is this year. I'm curious about that. The book ships on April 14th. When's Easter? Sometimes it's in...let's see Easter Sunday is April 11th. That's coincidence.

JM: Do you expect to maybe catch some heat over that? Did the guys at the offices ever think, "Hey, I wonder what the expectations are going to be for the sacks of mail?"

DJ: You know Joe, it's impossible to guess these things. Certainly going into this I never would have guessed that we would have somehow angered a lot of mental health organizations, yet we did. So on this one do I think we'll somehow anger all of organized religion? Maybe. Hopefully not, because it's certainly not meant to have any connection whatsoever. It's entirely coincidental. You go a lot longer than two months and people aren't as interested. There's an attention span we have where a two month layoff I think was good and reasonable. You just sort of titillate them and let the rumors build up or whatever and then you come out with a book. That's what it all had to do with. It had nothing to do with Easter.

JM: Was there pressure to bring him back so quick? He hasn't really been gone that long and it's very close on the heels of his actual death. Was that a conscious choice or did you guys want to maybe spread it out a little further and really let things build up?



DJ: If I had my way, but I don't, we wouldn't have seen or heard anything of Superman for at least a year. The books wouldn't have come back, we wouldn't have done anything for at least a year but I obviously did not get my way. I'm not saying my way was the right way by any means, actually there are people who probably know the market better than I do, so I would say that this is certainly the way that we are going to try to make it work. It's a hard decision. I give Bruce a lot of credit because it was a bit of a gutsy call to stop the books in the first place. Certainly at the time the books are leaving you've got 600,000 to 1,000,000 people reading. Why give up on that? I think the idea of the books disappearing and having all of that happen really contributed to the story overall so I'm not going to sit here and say that, "By God, we should have waited a year and it's a failure to do otherwise!"

JM: Obviously in your schedule now you're looking ahead to the next issues, the next storylines, etc. About how long do you have planned out from say, Superman #500 on, to get this current story tied up, and are your plans to stick around after that for awhile longer, or are you looking to try to do something different for awhile?

DJ: Just to give the readers an idea of how time works, what's the date today? January 11th? I'm writing a plot this morning for Superman #78 which will ship on April 27th. As far as the storyline of the four supermen, that is something that we'll probably spend between four and six months on, probably four months really building to a resolution and answering the questions, then revealing the identity of a superman and where has he been and how did he come back to life and all this other stuff because it won't be answered right away. As far as my plans, I'm certainly going to hang in there to do some of those things and I quit Justice League so I won't be doing that any longer. My plans are sort of in a state of flux I guess.

JM: Do you have any ideal projects you'd like to do, say, three years from now? Is there something in your mind crying, "Wow, I'd like to write that or draw that?" What's a plum job that you would have, Superman excluded?

DJ: Actually there are a lot of them. Unfortunately my

problem is that there are too many. I've always said if I had my druthers, if there was some way to physically do it, I'd love to do four books a month rather than just two. Hell, I'd love to write and draw five books a month because there is so much out there I'd like to do. So from that standpoint I can say, yeah, there's a lot of stuff that I want to do. Will I ever get to it? God only knows. The commitment that you have to make to a series is at minimum I'd say a year and that's a long time. To write and draw a book, there aren't many guys who can pull off two a month and even at that I feel like, gosh, there's so much else out there I want to get to. I don't know. I hope I can.

JM: I'll give you a rest from some of the Superman questions for a while. You've obviously done other books and things; where did you start, when did you start and how did you get in?

DJ: Okay. Let's start with when did I start and how did I get in. It was about 11 years ago and Mike Grell was in the Twin Cities here making a personal appearance. I stopped and showed him some of my work. At the time there was an opening on Warlord. Mike wasn't drawing it any more and it was being drawn by Mark Texiera and Jan Duusema and they were going to do other things. I showed them my work and about a month later I was doing the book. I started with Warlord #63, that was my first professional work. I've been doing stuff like that ever since. I didn't go through that stuff where you'd try an issue here and an issue there and you'd do a backup and then you'd wait for six months before the phone rings again. I was right into the deep waters from the start.

JM: Did you ever think at that point that some day, "Wow, I'm going to be drawing Superman"? Did you ever think it'd come to that and how did you wind up getting to be the guy doing Superman?

DJ: It's sort of funny. At that time Curt Swan was still doing Superman and very early in my career at DC, and I mean within the first six months, Karen Berger (who was then Editorial Coordinator) asked me if I could draw Superman. I said no, only Curt Swan can draw Superman. My version of it was so different from Curt Swan's I just didn't think it would be at all right. I always knew Superman would be fun to draw but I didn't think I could ever draw him in the way that DC

KAREN BERGER (WHO WAS THEN EDITORIAL COORDINATOR) ASKED ME IF I COULD DRAW SUPERMAN. I SAID NO, ONLY CURT SWAN CAN DRAW SUPERMAN...

would want, but the interest was there and eventually it ended up working out.

JM: Would you write a book if you weren't working on the art end or would you draw a book that you weren't writing?

DJ: The answer to both those questions is yes. I have written a couple of things which other artists have drawn which I always find a very intriguing process just because it never looked like how I envisioned it. Sometimes that's good and sometimes that's bad. I have gotten pages where I have gone ewwwwwww but I've also gotten pages where my response has been wow, that's great, that's better than I would have done it. I better work harder. There are writers out there whose work I respect so much that I would certainly want to work with them if the concept intrigued me, because my viewpoint has always been that no matter what writer I work with I will learn something. It might be something very, very bad that I will know enough to stay away from, or it might be something very, very good.

I ALWAYS KNEW SUPERMAN WOULD BE FUN TO DRAW BUT I DIDN'T THINK I COULD EVER DRAW HIM IN THE WAY THAT DC WOULD WANT...

JM: What's the toughest part for you working on a book, beyond any titles in particular. Is it actually sitting down and writing the book itself? Is it the actual artwork? Which part is the toughest and on the flip side to that, what part do you enjoy the most?

DJ: Hmmm. that's an interesting question. I probably enjoy actually drawing the book. I hate doing the covers and going through the process of doing cover sketches just because those are a pain. They tend not to be spontaneous at all. You have to do the sketches, fax them in, wait for approval and there are different considerations that come into it. I just find covers to be a tremendous pain in the butt. I like drawing the covers but hate the whole process of doing covers. I feel like I must do about 60 covers a year just because it can't be a month since I did the last cover. But it is. I find that to be a pain. I like doing the work when I come up with a story that I think is cool. I guess I like coming up with cool stories but I also like actually sitting down and just drawing. I like the job. I like to sit down and draw. That's still probably the favorite aspect of it all.

DAILY PLANET

JM: What do you draw for yourself, say beyond super-hero work? Let's say you're at home sitting there on a weekend, listening to music, do you ever draw things just for yourself?

DJ: I spend so much time at the board that if I'm not working and not doing comic stuff that has to get done, the last thing I want to do is to be spending time at the board. For me, when my time is free and there's not enough of it I do not want to be at the drawing board in any way, shape or form. So unfortunately and I think this is kind of sad, it's gotten to the point where I don't do a whole lot of other stuff. I'd rather go outside and find some guys and play basketball or something.

JM: Is that what you do in your spare time? You shoot some hoops?

DJ: Yeah sure. Go outside, shoot some hoops. It's actually a wonderful way as your right arm sort of tightens up and it gets to feeling sore by the middle or something. It's really a great way to flex the arm and loosen up the fingers and the palm, just to go out and shoot baskets.

JM: There's going to be a whole generation of young artists out there with Michael Jordan jerseys on now.

DJ: There you go guys. Put on the Reeboks and go outside and hit the boards.

JM: How do you work? What's the process like for you? Do you sit up all night and sketch things out really tightly and then start inking? How do you approach it?

DJ: I actually work a fairly regular sort of day in terms of business hours. I start in the morning trying to get at it by about eight o'clock. I'm most productive in the mornings just because the phone starts ringing in the afternoon. I try to get it done, break around the end of the afternoon, play with my son for a while, do some things, have dinner with the family and then go back to work later at night and use my night time and weekend time to catch up on other things like doing those damned awful cover sketches I talked about earlier. That's when I fit in the extra stuff. When you do a poster that's all night work or the trading cards or the covers. That's when I get all that done.

JM: You mentioned you have a son. How old is he and does he see all your stuff? Does he read?

DJ: No, he's only three and he's just not into Superman yet. He actually thinks that both Batman and Spider-Man are far more interesting-looking characters. I don't know. It's like all things, what dad does just isn't good enough I guess.

JM: Does he have a grasp of what dad does? Does he sit there with his friends and point to the framed pictures on the wall and say, "Oh, Dad does that." Is he at that age yet?

DJ: Actually he has a grasp of what dad does, but at the same time he thinks every kid's father draws comics. That's the other side of it. He knows what I do but he really does think that all fathers, when they work, do comic books. There you go.

JM: Working in comic books as opposed to working in any other field of art, what does that hold for you? What keeps you interested in comics as opposed to let's say trying your hand at film storyboards or commercial artwork?

DJ: I think that this is just a great job. I have more creative latitude in what I do than most people in any of the jobs you mentioned. There, you're always drawing exactly what you're told to draw. If you were an illustrator and you were given an advertising assignment to

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I WOULD LIKE TO THINK THAT WITH SUPER-HEROES, I'VE TOLD SOME EXCITING STORIES, AND I'VE ALSO TOLD SOME PERSONAL STORIES. IF I WANTED TO CHANGE MY AUDIENCE SOMEWHAT, I COULD TELL ANY STORY I WANT TO WITH A SUPER-HERO IN IT.

illustrate a humidifier, you'd draw the best goddamn humidifier you possibly could, then bring it in and the art director would still make changes on it, so you'll go home and make changes on the humidifier. That is not a thrilling job. Not to me anyway. This way, I actually get paid to sit down and draw. Most jobs you get paid to sit down and draw very certain, applied things. I get paid to sit down and just plain draw. There aren't many jobs like this in the world, I think this is just tremendous.

JM: You seem to have a lot of enthusiasm for it, more than most.

DJ: One of the things I really like about the Image guys, and that I sense from them, is that they are into comics. For the longest time you would read interviews in the press with comic creators that all sounded like they hated their job and they were ripping the business and granted the business deserved to be ripped. Not these guys though.

JM: You mention the enthusiasm; does the super-hero genre ever really seem like it's stifling? I know you mentioned that you can do anything you want in the field. Do you feel that super-heroes sometimes limits you in what you're doing creatively?

DJ: No. Not at all. I would like to think that with super-heroes, I've told some exciting stories and I've also told some personal stories. If I wanted to change my audience somewhat, I could tell any story I want to with a super-hero in it. The super-hero may not do anything that month. He may not shatter an asteroid. He may not pick up a tank. He may not use whatever power he has on some bad guy. There's no reason you can't do a story, for example, I'm about to go way out on a limb here, Mary Jane Watson getting pregnant and trying to decide as a model whether or not she wants to have an abortion. No reason they can't do that if they've got the guts to do it in Spider-Man. That's not a super-hero story although it could be. "Gee, I'm married to Spider-Man and he could get killed at any moment," make abortion the point of issue in the story. It's still a super-hero story but it's also much more than that. There's no reason why that can't be done and that's how I feel about it. No reason he can't deal with topics that are bigger than say the fight of the month in a given comic book.

JM: When you're writing, do you try to take into account the duality of readership you have that, yeah, on one level there's going to be your younger kids reading while at the same time giving adults something they can chew on as well?

DJ: I do somewhat because I think we have a mix. For example, if I wanted to do a Superman story about abortion I think there's one level you can approach it on if it is just a normal Superman comic book. If I really wanted to get into it and analyze it from an adult perspective, then I would probably say let's do this as a Superman special or a graphic novel or something like that, but there's still no reason not to do the story. It just means that you find the proper way to tell the story. You can still use super-heroes in it, but like I said, you can still do the

story. I think the stories that I've done that I'm proudest of have not been "the fights of the month."

JM: What stories, or what series, would you say is your favorite piece of work, one that if you retired tomorrow somebody would point to and say, "Wow, this was the best, or the pinnacle, or the most important or the most entertaining"? What would it be to you right now?

DJ: My favorite art job is probably Superman #75. My favorite stories I've written have probably been a Christmas story I did that actually Jackson Guice drew last year called Metropolis Mailbag, and a follow-up to it this year I wrote called Metropolis Mailbag II.

JM: With the Vertigo line out now, let's say that you are given a choice between doing a super-

hero type story in one of the regular books or something very different, off beat, almost completely adult and the money's the same. With all those considerations, what might you pick?

DJ: If I was interested in the concept, I think that's what would govern my decision. I'm always offered far more work than I can possibly do, so I judge based on a number of different things and I just say, gosh, what interests me more?, because you've got to be interested in what you're working on and you've got to have the enthusiasm that is born of that interest or you're screwing yourself and you're screwing the readers, because you're going to give it a half-assed effort. That's how I would judge it.

JM: As a professional looking at the rest of the industry, how do you judge it right now? How do you look at and gauge the industry because obviously its at one of it's smallest points in history, currently reaching the smallest market it's ever reached.

DJ: You think so?

THAT MEANS THAT THE GUYS WHO ARE AT DC, AND I MEAN EVERYBODY, EDITORS, WRITERS, ARTISTS, OR WHOMEVER AT DC, IT MEANS THEY'D BETTER LOOK INWARD A LITTLE BIT AND START WORKING A LITTLE BIT HARDER AND TRY AND FIND OUT WHAT'S GOING ON...

JM: Well numerically it is. Numerically there's far fewer buyers in the comic market today than there were let's say between '56 and '65. There's far fewer readers right now. They're just buying more copies.

DJ: In comparison to '56 and '65 I would actually agree with you. At the same time I think the industry is far healthier than it was between '56 to '65 and I would be willing to guess that there are far more readers we have now than they did in 1975.

JM: What do you think is the actual key to keeping the market growing? If you were the head of a comic company what would you be suggesting to continue to expand your audience in comics?

DJ: Do good work. That sounds remarkably simple and somewhat stifling but I think that's the case. For example, in the last couple of years we've seen a couple of things happen that I think are just tremendous. One, we've seen Valiant start up. I have a tremendous amount of appreciation for what Valiant has accomplished because they've done it with story-driven material. You look at the guys that went and started drawing those Valiant books right from the start and you're dealing with guys like Steve Ditko and Don Perlin and a number of other people who probably would have been put down around the major two companies as guys we can't possibly sell. Yet Valiant was put together and so story-driven, with intriguing characters and intriguing concepts that they made their company work doing good stories. At the same time,Image started off and succeeded with almost a totally different philosophy. Sure, they had some intriguing concepts and characters, but they were still starting off with big name talent. The guys who started Image certainly took a risk, and it's one that I appreciate, but the chances of people picking up their books for the first time were greater because these guys were coming off say Spider-Man, or an X book. What I find exciting is that both of these approaches have worked and succeeded and I think that's what makes the market stretch into different directions somewhat. By the same token what that does is it tends to make stuff like DC's overall products looked tired by comparison. That means that the guys who are at DC, and I mean everybody, editors, writers, artists, or whomever at DC, it means they'd better look inward a little bit and start working a little bit harder and try and find out what's going on, and if all this makes everybody work harder and try to do better material then we are all the better for it. If you look at the top 15 comics on the sales charts right now they are selling together a whole hell of a lot more units than the top 15 on the sales chart would have been four or five years ago and much, much more than the top 15 on any sales chart would have been 15 years ago. From that standpoint I think that our market is headed in a good direction.

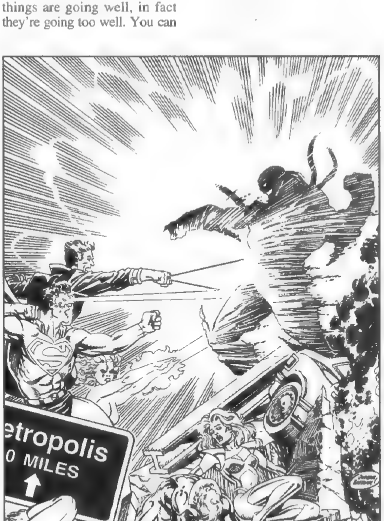
JM: Do you see that the story-driven element you mentioned is the key in continuing to sell a book? Obviously when you come out with something like Wild Cats #1 you could have no text at all and sell 2,000,000 copies, but do you think it's as important, especially with the advent of the new Image line, that the story-driven thing is what's going to keep the readers?

DJ: I don't know. They are taking a different approach to it. First of all the books aren't coming out, so that's a problem. What are the kids trying to buy? I think it's more than just Wild Cats #1 and it's more than just

Spawn #1 and it's more than just the elusive Wetworks #1. It's also they're trying to buy in on the sense of a movement and the sense of something exciting happening and a whole new line gearing up. I remember when I was a kid that's why I bought the Atlas comics when they first came out. I knew that, gee whiz, I'm getting the first issue of all these characters, the Phoenix and the Brute and the Scorpion and the Destructor...I think it was that Archie Goodwin and Steve Ditko did them and to me it was exciting because I felt like I was in on the ground floor of something. Well hell that's much more exciting I think to a kid than buying issue 700,000 of a character that's been around for 55 years. That's the problem we run up against in Superman. What will the overall effect of that be? I don't know. I think it means that we are all going to have to work a little bit harder and make some hard choices down the road of what we want to do and how we want to do it and where we want to go with the characters.

JM: Are comics something that you always wanted to do as a kid? Did you go to art school to get into this or did you just basically knock on doors and hone your craft until you got in?

DJ: I was always interested in doing comics as a kid and then I sort of gave it up because in the mid to late '70s every time you picked up a comic fan-type magazine, whether it was the Comics Journal or the Comics Reader, whatever it might have been then, it dealt with the impending death of comics. You had the DC implosion. You had talks of guys forming a union. Talented people were obviously bailing out right and left and all anyone was talking about in those interviews was that comics would be dead in five years. Hell, I looked at it at that point and said I'd better find something else to do, which I did. I went to art school and majored in graphic design with a minor in illustration but still kept an interest. In the early '80s I ended up getting in. Who knows now? I mean right now things are going well, in fact they're going too well. You can



feel that there's going to be a big shake down coming within the next year or two. Right now you've got a lot of people trying to get in on the latest gimmicks but at the same time there's no denying that the market is

THE MOST MAJOR INFLUENCE... WAS PROBABLY NEAL ADAMS... BEFORE THAT I WAS REALLY INFLUENCED BY CURT SWAN AND JACK KIRBY.

stretching, new companies are growing and that's good for everybody.

JM: Who influenced you? You said you went to art school, but who were your influences coming into comics and who do you look at for inspiration or just for enjoyment today?

DJ: It changes almost on a monthly basis. When I was a kid there's no denying that the most major influence at that time was probably Neal Adams. At the same time, before that I was really influenced by Curt Swan and along with that, Jack Kirby. You put those three together and those are three very different approaches yet they all influenced me somehow and that continues to grow. Even now when I see good work it just makes me want to work harder. Several years ago when I was on the Superman books Kerry Gammill and Jerry Ordway and George Perez were all drawing books along with myself, and I would see their pages come in and it was like, "Ooh man that stuff is great, I'd better go work harder." Even now if I pick up a book that Jose Luis Garcia-Lopez has drawn, that's my response. Time to work harder. So I'm still influenced by a lot of stuff and challenged by people who are doing good, exciting work.

JM: You're a writer and an artist working in an industry where there's probably a million people who you know as friends and co-workers, what do you still read, if you do read anything, and are there titles that you actually go and seek out?

DJ: Definitely. For example, Concrete was something that I would look for all the time and just couldn't wait to read again. At DC certainly whenever Sandman comes in I'll sit down and give that an immediate. There's no denying that there was a time when I read and enjoyed anything that Chris Claremont did whether it was the X-Men or before that Iron Fist, all that stuff. Right now I'm still reading all the Valiant titles just because I think that they've done a very nice job of putting it all together and like I said I give them a lot of credit. I read, let's see, some of the Image stuff just to see what's going on there and certainly at Marvel there are a few characters that I read just because I enjoy the characters. I think the Hulk has been a very good read the last couple of years, along with everybody else who agrees with me on that I suppose. Yeah, I'm still enthused by comics. I still like reading them and finding a good comic to read. That's still a lot of fun.

JM: Do you have a favorite looking back over the years that something that you'd actually slip into a mylar and say you're going to give to your son someday and tell him, hey, this is the

one man, this was a comic to read.

DJ: My one favorite comic? Yeah I don't remember the number but it would have been a Detective comic. It was back when Archie Goodwin was editing the book and writing the Batman story in it and Walt Simonson was doing the Manhunter backup and I thought that was just the coolest stuff going ever. I remember the final Manhunter story where Manhunter dies at the end of the story and of course at that time I didn't have access to any comic's press if there was any, that was 1974 maybe. I didn't know anything was coming up and I just read that story and had been really going along for the ride. I thought Manhunter was just great and then the end of the story comes out and he dies! It was this great Walt Simonson art job and I thought just, wow, that's cool. I remember the impact it made upon me, probably as a 14 year old kid, and just the feeling of entertainment that was there. I walked away from it and would think about it for a couple of days. That's the job. You know? That's the job, to entertain somebody somehow and when they put down your comic it's like walking out of a movie. If you're still thinking about it the next day or two days later you got your money's worth and that's what I try to give the people now. If they put down one of mine and get that, well, then I feel like I've done my job.

JM: Do you do many conventions? Do you go out and get to see people often?

DJ: I don't do as many as I used to. For one reason, it's work and it takes me away from the board and for another reason it's just that it gets to the point where I'd probably rather sit down and spend the time with my family so I cut it down to about four or five a year.

JM: What's the best part of it when you're out on the road traveling somewhere? What's the best part of a convention and do you have a convention story about meeting a certain fan or anything like that?

DJ: Gosh, I don't know if I have any one favorite. I've met so many nice people. I did a convention last year in Sydney, Australia where they just were wonderful to us and I don't mean just the convention organizers, I mean the fans as well. I did a convention a couple of years ago in Kansas City where instead of being organized by just one person with a profit motive, not that that's bad, but it was like a club of people who put on this show and the enthusiasm was there and I always like the conventions that are less jaded. There's a sense of enthusiasm and innocence I guess with the attendees and when I find out, that actually induces me more. I find like when I do

the Chicago conventions, and some New York conventions and even the San Diego con, certainly the San Diego con, that tends to be a more jaded audience and the spirit is different, if there's any spirit at all. I like conventions that have energy and spirit because of the enthusiasm there.

JM: When you're out on the road and somebody hands you their Death of Superman, or maybe even an earlier work, do you still get the same feeling now as at your first convention that wow, this is something special?

DJ: It depends on whether it's ten o'clock in the morning or seven o'clock at night, just because by that time you've signed a gazillion autographs and you're beat and you've answered the same questions 5,000 times, but certainly I think that in any convention some of what happens is a fairly healthy dose of ego stroking for professionals. I mean, you've got people standing in front of you for the most part telling you that they like what you do and that's always gratifying. In fact, if someone comes up to me and says they don't like what I did there's some gratification in that too, because then I'll say, "Well, you bothered to read it, tell me what you don't like about it" and chances are those people will have not only read it, they've given it some thought. They're not just slipping you an easy compliment. They've given it some thought and they want to discuss it with you. I welcome that as well.

JM: Do you think that there are as many people really reading comics as there used to be or do you find that the collector's market has watered that down a bit? Are there as many readers out there, people who do come up to you or write to you or meet you on the street and say, "Hey, I read this and thought about it."? What do you feel?

DJ: As five years ago? Yes. Certainly there are a lot of people out there buying the books and bagging them, all five copies that they bought and sticking them in their basement. In the investor market I think it's somewhat troubling only because it tends to de-stabilize things and that means at some point a lot of people are going to pay the price. By the same token I still think that there are a lot of people who are into it and by that I kind of cite the X-Men as an example. The X-Men sales, if you chart them, have seemingly gone up every year and it's not because everyone who read the X-Men 10 or 15 years ago are still reading it today. A lot of those people left yet a lot of new people came into it and started reading it as well as all the various added books. It's bigger than just people buying it and bagging it. One of the things I hear at DC all the time from editors who do not want to, or who want to somehow deny the fact that DC's books have a lot of these sales or something, is that "Gee, the X-Men only sells because everybody is buying multiple copies and bagging it." Well that's

bullshit. I mean, maybe some of them are but at the same time the sales on those books have continued to climb for a long, long time and they've had books added on to the X-Men family, the other mutant books, and they've almost become a company unto themselves. The same thing with Spider-Man. When Todd left the book it's not like everyone gave up on it. Certainly the sales went down but even then everyone at DC for example said that book only sells because everyone is buying multiple copies and bagging them. But I don't know that that's happening any more. I think a lot of completists are buying the books but I don't think that there's a lot of people buying two or three to stash away. The Spider-Man thing has grown throughout the past couple of years where all the books went up in sales when they were doing things with the various characters that interested the marketplace, because of the stories. I somehow get the feeling there are more people out there buying the books and yes, there are a lot of kids throwing them in the boxes and bags but I still think there are just more people out there buying the books.

JM: Do you ever come up against something and say, "I'm going to make a statement," be it social or personal or something where you actually say, "I'm taking this book and steering it into my own direction."

DJ: Yes. I've done that a couple of times. Several years ago I did an issue of Adventures of Superman that dealt with drunk driving and Superman appeared in about one, maybe two panels of the entire job. I think if you look at how any editor might like a formula for Superman to be done in the old days it would have said, Superman has to lift an ocean liner up out of the ocean somewhere in the course of this story. Fortunately, with today's marketplace we aren't necessarily restricted by those things and Mike Carlin, who was tremendously supportive of this sort of approach let us go

ahead and do something like that, a story with a message. I wouldn't lie and say that the sales and went through the roof but there are other satisfactory things that come out of it where you really do touch people. People pay notice to it and see it as a somewhat responsible thing to do. So yeah, that's a case where you can take sort of a month off

...THERE'S PRESSURE ON ALL THE GUYS WHO WORK ON THE SUPERMAN BOOK TO KEEP THIS THING GOING SOME HOW AND TO KEEP THE MATERIAL GOOD...

and take over the book a little more and get away from, again, what I call the fight of the month to do something somewhat restructured and something different.

JM: Do you work a lot of your own personal life experiences into the book? Do you like to take things from your personal life down to little anecdotes and reactions and other minor characters and use them, or is it pretty much mostly fiction?

DJ: To answer that I'd say that everyone is the sum of all their experiences and you can't deny that. I may not do so consciously but I think it gets into the books. I think traits I've observed in other people I know, and all that gets into the book somehow. I don't think I do it consciously but you and I both, as the sum of all our experiences, are going to do that when we write. I don't think you can not do that, so to answer your question I would say yes.

JM: Outside comics are there other personal things that you would like to do with either art or writing in the future? Is there a book you'd like to write, a painting you'd like to paint? What would you do completely outside comics?

DJ: Writing a book is something so terribly intimidating that I would probably freeze at the keyboard. Writing something like a screenplay is more intriguing just because it starts to involve pictures and by God I know pictures. Artistically I used to have a great desire to mess around with painting and that sort of thing and now I just don't because other things occupy my time. I don't know, it's a funny thing. Somehow it often seems like the world of motion pictures and comics are very closely related. At the same time, the biggest fault I see in most writers in comics is that they all think they're writing a screenplay when they're writing a comic book and they don't understand the difference. It's quite apparent to an artist, or someone who understands the medium, but not to them. I still think that's something that would be intriguing to try. Me and about 500,000 other guys in the business.

JM: Do you have any trepidation about being attached, now that you've done something that's so huge in the industry with this one character. that maybe people will forget about what else you have done?

DJ: I think that in the future no matter what I do, that in any biography on me it's certainly going to mention that I did Superman #75. You know, it's the second best-selling comic book of all time. That's nothing you can deny or walk away from. I'm very, very proud that I did that, so that would be fine. I would just hope that what my biography in ten years might be, is something like the guy who did Superman #75 and the guy who did dadotdadotdadot other worthwhile things over the course of the next few years as well. Hopefully there are other worthwhile things coming after this.

JM: Are you expecting any additional pressure now that you're coming off the second hottest selling title of all time? Do you feel that being imposed either by others or yourself?

DJ: I for one thing will impose it on myself. I think that in the short term alone there's pressure on all the guys who work on the Superman book to keep this thing going somehow and to keep the material good and worth looking at so that in eight months time we won't be called a bunch of guys who just did a bullshit story and a bullshit event. At that point, we've all failed. I always like to put pres-

sure on myself anyway. I always hope the job I do next year is going to be better than the job I do this year, and that there's some sense of progression and improvement.

JM: Considering all of the media exposure the death of Superman has had, do people recognize you by name? In other words, does Dan Jurgens have star status now?

DJ: I have been in a couple of situations where I had been on TV and I've been places where I've been recognized for that, not because of my name but because of the TV appearances at the time. I'm sure those will be quickly forgotten though. Such is the nature of our 15 seconds in the sun.

JM: You mentioned the other guys and the entire staff, with all these books. Who's the guy in charge of this whole thing? Is there one overall editor who's wrangling in all these guys to make sure everything keeps going on schedule?

DJ: Certainly the grand Poohbah in all of this is Mike Carlin and Mike has the tremendous job of trying to keep us organized not only in terms of just making sure that the books match, but also the tremendous job of balancing all the egos and interests that are involved in a cooperative work like this. He does it about as well as anybody possibly could.

JM: Does he contribute ideas when you are plotting the stories?

DJ: In any sort of creative enterprise, it's always hard to tell where the ideas start and where they stop. I think that with the Superman titles, since there are four of them that are linked so closely together, the ideas come from a variety of sources. Everyone is invited to participate, to solicit any ideas they might have and at different times there's been different degrees of involvement from everyone who works on the book

IF IT'S HERE ALREADY THERE IS NO TELLING WHAT IT'S DOING ON THE SURFACE!
HAVE TO FIND A WAY TO STOP IT. I CAN'T LET BRAINIAC HAVE THE LAST LAUGH!

THEY'RE DIFFERENT ENTITIES. THEY ALL MIGHT CALL THEMSELVES SUPERMAN TO ONE DEGREE OR ANOTHER, OR LET THE WORLD BELIEVE THAT THEY ARE SUPERMAN, BUT WHAT IS THE TRUTH OF THAT IN EACH AND EVERY CHARACTER? THAT BECOMES THE MYSTERY.

JM: How involved was Mike in the death of Superman storyline?

DJ: He was real involved, especially when we originally coordinated it. That same meeting where we decided to do the death of Superman, we structured it so we could play with the element of time across the books. We wanted the fight to feel like a real fight, just speeded up, and that's why, for example, one of the issues had four panels a page, then it went to three panels, two panels and then finally splash pages where Superman dies. That was something that everyone had to get in on and coordinate. Mike was instrumental in that. At the same time, because I had two Justice League stories that tied into the death of Superman, he certainly read my outlines and everything but he wasn't necessarily involved in the actual plotting. Generally we all agree on a direction then each writer goes off and plots his or her own story.

JM: What's it like working under Mike or anybody who's putting together such a monumental project? Four titles coming out in one week, the whole death of Superman storyline.

DJ: It's tough. Mike is a very direct and honest person and I'm probably that way myself; because of that we certainly have our share of disagreements and sometimes they get pretty loud. At the same time we're pulling off something that no one has done before, in a way, which is a weekly comic book, and I think Superman as an entity in the past couple of years has been stronger than he has been in a long, long time. I think we've made a tired, old character into a bit of a success and this I should say is before the death of Superman stuff. Somehow we gave the books a little more integrity then they had before and a greater reason to read them than they had before and I think we all look at that, and when I say the guys, that includes Weezie [Louise Simonson] and of course all the writers and artists on the books. We all take a great deal of satisfaction from it that makes the disagreements I cited earlier worthwhile.

JM: So you can mainly work out the run-ins?

DJ: There are probably more now, just because everyone is watching us more closely, but we work it out. I've been working like I said on Superman for five years and I wouldn't still be there if it weren't satisfying.

Yeah, we manage to work it out. It's tough but I think we've managed to all pull it off.

JM: What were the final numbers on Superman #75? Do you have figures on how many books sold?

DJ: At last count we were at 4 1/2 million copies but that figure doesn't include any of the newsstand sales so it'll go up from there.

JM: Five years is a pretty long run on any book. When you came to Superman was he a tired character? Did you see him that way? Did you approach Superman with the attitude that there's things I have to do right off the bat to get a surge going and try to build up things?

DJ: No, because my first Superman job was drawing an annual that Jim Starlin wrote and at that time John Byrne was still doing the regular book. It was shortly after that John left and a couple of other guys came on board and I started doing some work there, since then it's been almost nonstop. I think that when Byrne sort of redid Superman that he got the world looking at it again and opened up the door for us to do a lot of things that we're doing now. So I wouldn't say it was tired necessarily when I got there, certainly not as a writer.

JM: Concerning the powers of the new "Supermen", are there going to be changes? Will they be split and is he going to come back as powerful, in any of the incarnations, as he was before?

DJ: Of the incarnations he comes back in I think it's fair to say that a couple of them will be more powerful and a couple of them might be less powerful. Not to be evasive but they're different entities. They all might call themselves Superman to one degree or another, or let the world believe that they are Superman, but what is the truth of that in each and every character? That becomes the mystery. Are the powers any sort of a clue someplace? What are the clues to who Superman is and how did he really come back? Where does that all come from? That is the essence of the story and as far as powers go, perhaps they will provide some clues to it, or maybe they're just red herrings. Like I said, the powers are going to be different for all four of the characters.

JM: Are the four incarnations going to somehow react to the death of Doomsday or be on the look-out for the possibility of a resurrection of Doomsday?

...AS FAR AS POWERS GO, PERHAPS THEY WILL PROVIDE SOME CLUES TO IT, OR MAYBE THEY'RE JUST RED HERRINGS.

DJ: Actually my first story in Superman #78 is going to deal very, very directly with Doomsday and these guys being aware of what Doomsday means. It will be my character that goes to take care of Doomsday's body with some sense of a final solution about it so yeah, that's going to play a role in it right from the start.

JM: In getting back to the actual "who this affects," in fact it's one of Lex Luthor's lines "Do we need someone who brings this kind of wrath?" What's going to be the affect on Metropolis, the scene of this ground zero battle? Will that be a big story tie-in too? Do you have to explain how Metropolis is going to rebuilt around these guys?

DJ: One of the characters is associated very, very directly with the destruction of Metropolis. The new character appearing in Man of Steel has a direct and very real bearing on Metropolis and its destruction and his origin is actually born in part because of Metropolis' destruction. Will that play a role in it? Definitely.

JM: Does the upcoming series have a different spin on things than the death series has? Is there something you guys can actually point to and say the death of Superman had this, the resurrection is certainly going to have this? Any one element stand out?

DJ: I think the one element is probably the sense of mystery of it all. That's the one thing that's going to come out of this. The one thing that I'm looking for is...First of all, all that's happened for the past couple of months is people speculating on Superman coming back and what he will be when he is back. One of the theories has been that he's going to be the Punisher Superman for example, and there have been a lot of other ones like that, or just how he came back and all this other stuff. What we want to do is say, "gee, well that was a mystery" to all the readers. Okay, let's take that and let's play on that. Let's multiply that further, when Adventures #500 ends,

Superman's casket is empty. We don't know how it's empty. We don't know why it's empty. We don't know what happened. We don't know what Superman transformed into. We don't

know how he was transformed. We don't know if someone took him and rebuilt him. We don't know if someone came and just somehow brought him back to life, or re-engineered him into Superboy, or what happened.

That's the mystery that will develop here and if there is one thing that comes out of this, then I would call it the resurrection mystery. Who is Superman? What is Superman? How did he get there? Hang with us for a few months and we'll give you the answers and that's what I think we want to come out of this.

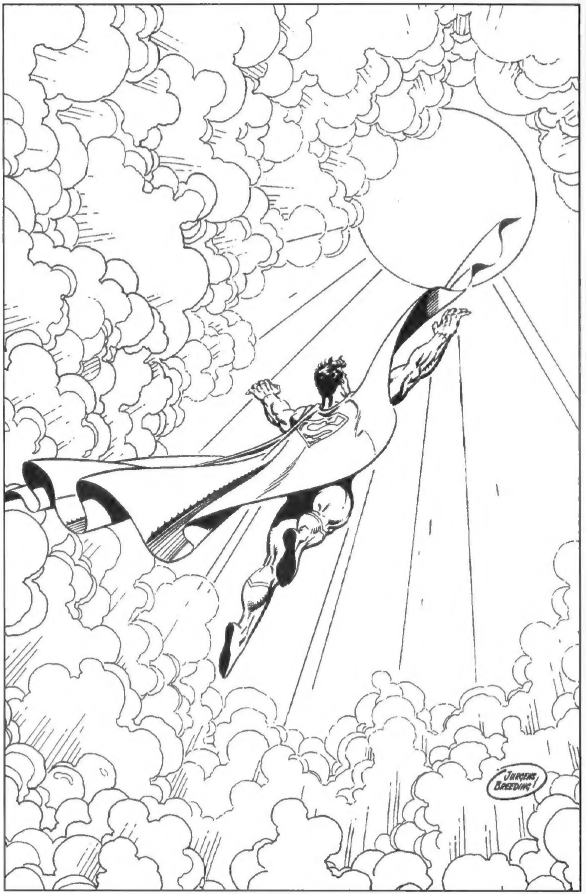
JM: Okay. Lastly, where does this leave Lois? If you can say anything about where this will leave Lois, either her starting off or what she's going to have to deal with, I think that would be a fitting end to this one.

DJ: Yeah, see now this is the fun stuff. This is why we like doing Superman and what we have going here. Ask this question of your own personal life: Let's say you're engaged to someone, they die, all of a sudden you walk out your door one morning, four of them are standing in your front lawn and to one degree or another they all say they are your fiance. You're going to freak out. That's what's going to happen to Lois. I'm not saying that's she's going to go nuts or else we'll get the mental health people after us again, but what I will say is that it becomes a tremendously confusing time for Lois, and a painful one. To have all this happening around her, as well as for the other people of Metropolis, and certainly the Kents. That's the kind of stuff we're going to be playing with as all of this story comes about, and also what happens within the DC Universe. I think on this one we'll see more of the DC books playing along with us, and willing to say we might do something worthwhile that they can profit from, and that will certainly build to a major, major conclusion over the course of several months.

Joe Monks would like it remembered that he gave up on a career in law to pursue his first love, writing. Known primarily as co-creator/publisher/writer of ***Cry For Dawn,*** *he's currently at work editing a collection of short prose stories, as well as writing a mini-series slated for publication later this year entitled* ***The Face of Medusa.***

...IT BECOMES A TREMENDOUSY CONFUSING TIME FOR LOIS, AND A PAINFUL ONE.

JURGENS
BRETTWEISER


JUMPERS BREEDING!